



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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FISH AND WILDLIFE

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The soft, warm wool of the Angora rabbit which gives the fuzzy appearance to many fine knitted articles is now being produced in the United States at the rate of 50,000 pounds a year, according to Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior.

France, England, and Japan formerly supplied the largest portions of this fine wool to American mills but since the war most of these imports have been cut off. Scarcity of the wool and consequent high prices have done much to encourage U. S. production. The finest grade of this wool now brings about \$10 a pound although lower grades sell for considerably less.

There is some dispute as to whether the Angora rabbit originated in Turkey or France. Its name is taken from the Turkish capital Ankara which formerly was known as Angora and it is believed to have been brought to France by sailors early in the 18th century. Whether or not the rabbit's origin was in Turkey, it is certain that the French did most to develop the breed commercially. There are now two strains of these rabbits, the French and English, both of which have good qualities. The French Angora is larger than the English, and the English has longer and finer wool than the French.

The basic rules for raising Angora rabbits vary only slightly from those followed for other domestic rabbits raised for meat and fur. The wool, which is warmer than the finest sheep's wool, grows from five to eight inches a year. Under the common commercial practice of shearing four times a year, the wool attains a length of two and a half or three and a half inches a quarter. A mature rabbit, not nursing young, produces about 12 ounces of wool a year.

Because Angora rabbit wool is so scarce and expensive it is usually mixed with other wools to give them warmth, softness, and an attractive appearance. Only rarely is yarn woven entirely from Angora wool. Before the war U. S. mills were importing nearly 100,000 pounds of this wool a year. In addition a considerable quantity of yarn containing Angora was imported, as were many articles of clothing woven from such yarn.

Authorities believe that present prices for the wool may fall after the war when foreign sources resume shipments but demand has always been great and there is little likelihood that more can be produced than will be absorbed.

Stories about the productiveness of rabbits have led many people to believe that rabbit raising is a completely simple task, destined to unquestioned success. This is not the case. Rabbit raising can be profitable and interesting but effort and knowledge are required.

Usually beginners in rabbit raising should start with only three or four does and a buck, increasing the herd as experience is gained and as the market warrants. As a sideline for persons on farms, particularly members of 4-H clubs, and for people living in small communities, rabbit raising can be particularly attractive.

After the war, raising of Angora rabbits may be a satisfactory solution to employment problems of partially disabled veterans.